



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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Governor Blagojevich, IDOT Honored for Success of *Operation Teen Safe Driving* Program

***Groundbreaking safe driving initiative gains national recognition; one of
six finalists for PR News Corporate/Nonprofit Partnership Award***

CHICAGO – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced that the first-of-its-kind *Operation Teen Safe Driving* program in Illinois has been recognized as a national finalist for a PR News Nonprofit PR Award. Governor Blagojevich and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) were honored for a successful partnership with the Ford Motor Company Fund and the Allstate Foundation in a program designed to reduce teen traffic fatalities throughout Illinois. Finalists were recognized this afternoon during an awards luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Provisional data shows that after the inception of the program, the number of teen fatalities (ages 16-19) dropped from 147 during the period of January through November 2007 to 85 during the same period in 2008.

“With the significant drop in teen fatalities in Illinois, it’s clear that our teenagers are making a difference in their communities by participating in the *Operation Teen Safe Driving* program,” said Governor Blagojevich. “Being considered for this award is an outstanding honor and I am proud of the dedication and hard work put forth by high school students throughout our state.”

Operation Teen Safe Driving is a statewide initiative designed to help Illinois high schools implement local teen-led safe driving campaigns. The goal is to decrease the number of traffic fatalities and crashes involving teenagers through these community-wide efforts.

The *Operation Teen Safe Driving* initiative requires students to identify issues relating to traffic safety in their communities and then design and implement awareness curriculums in their schools to combat traffic safety problems. Selected schools are chosen based on their effectiveness in identifying the problems, creativity of proposals in addressing them, and the programs’ ability to reach teens and entire communities.

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“Saving lives and keeping Illinois’ roadways safe are top priorities of the Blagojevich Administration and we are thrilled to be considered for this award,” said IDOT Secretary Milton R. Sees. “Our combined efforts with the Ford Motor Company Fund and the Allstate Foundation have had a tremendous impact on our teens and have contributed to safer Illinois roadways.”

Operation Teen Safe Driving is modeled from the nationally recognized Ford *Driving Skills for Life* school-based pilot project and Secretary of State Jesse White’s Teen Driving Task Force.

“Ford *Driving Skills for Life* was pleased to partner with the State of Illinois and the Allstate Foundation to save teen lives across the state,” said Jim Graham, Manager of Ford Motor Company’s *Driving Skills for Life* Program. “We would like to applaud PR News for honoring all of us for our efforts.”

“Saving lives and preventing injuries among teen drivers is a priority for the Allstate Foundation,” said Linda Moynihan, Regional Distribution Leader, Allstate Insurance Company. “This consideration showcases the outstanding efforts of Illinois high school students to effectively promote teen safe driving messages.”

For a list of this year’s schools selected for the *Operation Teen Safe Driving* initiative, go to the program’s website at www.teensafedrivingillinois.org